

**NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER**

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Director

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Robert R. Bowie  
Director of National Foreign Assessment Center

SUBJECT : Pacific Ocean Islands

1. Action Requested: None; for information only. This memorandum is in response to your request for comments on United States intelligence interest in the Pacific Ocean islands in the next few years in view of Professor Moos' very thorough treatment of the problems and challenges of the area as a whole, as well as of the individual countries. The subject area is of some interest to CIA; several studies are underway in NFAC. Our intelligence requirements are limited, however, and can be met for the foreseeable future by embassy reporting from Wellington, Suva, and Port Moresby.

Discussion

2. The South Pacific is generally of secondary policy and intelligence interest. The young island nations and Australia and New Zealand would welcome greater US attention to the area, and at least two South Pacific states have expressed interest in being included under the security umbrella of ANZUS, the Australia-New Zealand-US alliance. The US view, however, has been that the South Pacific is primarily Australia's and New Zealand's bailiwick and that preservation of security in the area is a contribution to be made to the trilateral ANZUS relationships.

3. As Professor Moos discusses in some detail, political developments in the South Pacific center on efforts by island nations to be successful in the new responsibilities of nationhood, and to also strengthen a sense of regionalism, a goal complicated

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by historic inter-island rivalries and by personal animosities among various island leaders. The specter of Sino-Soviet competition, aroused three years ago by Chinese reaction to Soviet overtures in the area, has receded. The island leaders' deep suspicion of the Soviet Union has blocked Soviet attempts to open a diplomatic mission in the area. Chinese activities from their embassies in Fiji and Western Samoa have been notably low-key, limited to modest aid programs in these two countries. High-level Chinese visitors have more often than not delivered long-winded warnings to their islander hosts about Soviet hegemony, to the neglect of aid promises that the islanders would like to hear.

4. United States economic interest in the South Pacific is currently centered on continued access to rich tuna fishing grounds, as the island nations declare 200-mile economic zones. The South Pacific states last fall rejected US membership in a proposed regional fisheries organization, on grounds that the body would be overwhelmed by US participation. Denial of a US role was also meant to underscore their objections to the US view that tuna, a highly migratory species, should not fall under the fishing regulations of countries whose 200-mile zones they traverse. The islanders' views on tuna also derive from economic considerations--the impoverished island states look on fishing fees as a much needed source of income.

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